

Sinclair Broadcasting's decision to force their stations to air an anti-Kerry documentary days before the election is a clear example of the dangers of media consolidation.

Sinclair uses the public airwaves free of charge, and is obligated by law to serve the public interest. But when large companies control the airwaves, we get more of what's good for the bottom line and less of what we need for our democracy.

I believe a broadcast company can be stronger when allowed to grow. This can benefit the public good because they can pool their resources into better programming, but it is a huge responsibility to bear. The larger the broadcast footprint the more people a single decision can affect. I don't think it is responsible in our society to allow any corporation to grow its sphere of influence beyond their local community without heavy oversight ensuring they avoid the temptations of their position.

For example, most decency laws are based on 'local' standards. When a large broadcaster is using public airwaves on a national scale they have a responsibility to the lowest common denominator unless they tailor their broadcast to each locality. Forcing stations to air anything, goes directly against this sense of local accountability and should be an immediate red flag to a supervising agency that inappropriate or illegal manipulation is taking place.